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PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE

Synthesis of the Expert Group Meetings convened as part of the substantive preparations for the Conference

Report of the Secretary-General of the Conference

SUMMARY

The present report is a companion document to the recommendations of the six Expert Group Meetings convened by the Secretary-General of the International Conference on Population and Development as part of the substantive preparations for the Conference. It includes a brief description of the organizational aspects of the Expert Group Meetings, a summary of their recommendations and an overview of issues of overriding importance which were examined at more than one Meeting.

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I. ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1991/93, authorized the Secretary-General of the International Conference on Population and Development to convene six expert group meetings, corresponding to the six clusters of issues identified by the Council as those requiring the greatest attention during the forthcoming decade. Those clusters of issues (not listed in any order of priority, as the Council expressly indicated) were the following:

(a) Population growth, changes in demographic structure, including ageing of the population, and the regional diversity of such changes, with particular emphasis on the interaction between demographic variables and socio-economic development;

(b) Population policies and programmes, with emphasis on the mobilization of resources for developing countries, at the international and national levels by each country according to its capacity;

(c) The interrelationships between population, development, environment and related matters;

(d) Changes in the distribution of population, including socio-economic determinants of internal migration and the consequences for urban and rural development, as well as determinants and consequences of all types of international migration;

(e) Linkages between enhancing the roles and socio-economic status of women and population dynamics, including adolescent motherhood, maternal and child health, education and employment, with particular reference to the access of women to resources and the provision of services;

(f) Family planning programmes, health and family well-being.

2. The Expert Group Meetings were organized by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Development of the United Nations Secretariat, in consultation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Each Expert Group included 15 experts, invited in their personal capacities, along with representatives of relevant units, bodies and organizations of the United Nations system and selected intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Efforts were made to have a full range of relevant scientific disciplines and geographical regions represented. Each Expert Group Meeting lasted five days. The standard documentation for each Meeting included a substantive background paper prepared by the Population Division in consultation with UNFPA, technical papers prepared by each of the experts and technical contributions provided by the participating United Nations regional commissions, specialized agencies and other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. At the conclusion of each Meeting, a set of recommendations was adopted to be submitted to the Preparatory Committee of the Conference at its second session, in May 1993. The number of recommendations in each set varied between 18 and 37, adding up to a total of 162 recommendations. 1/

3. The first Expert Group Meeting, on population, environment and development, was held at United Nations Headquarters from 20 to 24 January 1992. The second, on population policies and programmes, was hosted by the Government of Egypt in Cairo, from 12 to 16 April 1992. The third, on population and women, was hosted by the Government of Botswana in Gaborone, from 22 to 26 June 1992 and financed by a contribution from the Government of the Netherlands. The fourth, on family planning, health and family well-being, was hosted by the Government of India in Bangalore, from 26 to 29 October 1992. The fifth, on population growth and demographic structure, was hosted by the Government of France in Paris, from 16 to 20 November 1992. The sixth, on population distribution and migration, was hosted by the Government of Bolivia in Santa Cruz, from 18 to 23 January 1993.

II. SUMMARY OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETINGS

A. Population, environment and development

4. The Expert Group Meeting appraised current trends in population and environment, focusing on their implications for sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The discussions concentrated on those areas where population growth and distribution had adverse impacts on the availability and use of key natural resources, such as freshwater, soils and forests, as well as on the interactions of demographic factors, consumption and production patterns in global issues of increasing international concern, such as climate change and loss of biological diversity. The deliberations had as an essential perspective the goals of the World Population Plan of Action and specific policy measures that would promote the achievement of those goals. 2/

5. The Meeting, having reviewed available methodological approaches as well as the findings of empirical research and their policy and operational implications, concluded that, in many contexts, detrimental impacts on the environment would best be reduced by a combined strategy of slowing population growth, rationalizing population distribution, alleviating poverty, lessening environmentally dangerous consumption patterns and promoting the application of appropriate technologies and management regimes. In this context, the Meeting stressed the need to develop and promote the application of technologies that would make it possible to achieve sustained economic growth as well as sustainable development, in particular by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources and providing a more productive use of increasingly scarce water resources.

6. As rapid population growth, persistence of poverty and environmental degradation were intrinsically interlinked, development policies should aim at tapping the beneficial potential of this synergism. Thus, economic activities stimulated by environmental objectives, such as agro-forestry, reforestation, contour-levelling, terracing, small-scale irrigation or improvements in sanitation infrastructure, should be able to generate significant employment opportunities for poor people. Targeted social safety nets would make it less compelling for the poor to over-exploit natural resources during periods of crisis. Equitable economic growth, coupled with education and health services, would enable the poor to make environmental investments that were in their own long-term interest. And the improvement of the livelihood base of the poor

would also contribute to accelerating the demographic transition, since wealthier and better educated couples would be likely to have fewer children.

7. Since rapid population growth particularly affected environmental conditions in certain critical ecological zones, such as arid lands, tropical forests, watersheds and coastal areas, Governments were urged to identify regions subject to acute population pressures and to institute policies that would alleviate the pressure on the environment. Concurrently, it was observed that the continuing establishment of new human settlements and the extension of natural resources exploitation in areas of high vulnerability to natural disasters called for the promotion of emergency prevention and preparedness, while durable solutions should be found to problems related to environmentally displaced persons.

8. The Meeting found that although demographic, economic and ecological processes were inextricably interrelated, the magnitude of their reciprocal impacts in different sociocultural and ecological settings had not been sufficiently documented. Thus, in order to promote sustainable development, the Meeting emphasized the urgent need to strengthen data-collection and research efforts in that domain and to test the efficacy of proposed policies and strategies in concrete settings. International organizations should increase their assistance to countries in the fields of population, sustainable development and environment, especially with respect to training, research, policy formulation and the integration of population and environment-related factors in national planning.

9. The Meeting underscored that community participation was essential to the success of development, population and environment programmes. Therefore, great emphasis should be put on popular education and participation, especially of women. Governments should improve women's educational levels, health status, employment opportunities, environmental sensitivity and participation in decision-making.

B. Population policies and programmes

10. The Expert Group Meeting observed that since 1984 the issue of population growth had become less politically divisive. Over the past decade, there had been a growing convergence of views at the national level, with many more countries currently in favour of acting to modify population growth. Whereas there was continuing debate over how to achieve it, the stabilization of global population within the shortest period possible had become an internationally recognized goal.

11. The Meeting agreed that achieving this goal would require sustained political commitment in a climate in which population issues and related development issues would be considered central to public policy. In particular, development programmes should be formulated with a long-term perspective, with due attention to developmental sustainability and emerging demographic issues, and population considerations should be taken into account at all levels of decision-making and in all sectors of development policy. Governments should set clear population objectives and devote appropriate resources to population activities and to social and economic development programmes that supported

those activities. Development programmes, including structural adjustment programmes, should also be assessed and evaluated in the light of their demographic impacts, in order to ensure a policy framework promoting balanced and sustainable development.

12. The Meeting defined as a high priority developmental goal the adoption of policies sensitive to gender concerns that would respond to the diverse family planning and health needs of both women and men and urged Governments to build on women's established rights to ensure that they would play a key role in policy-making and implementation processes.

13. The Meeting found that, although the formulation of a population policy was a necessary condition for ensuring sustainable development, it was not by itself a sufficient condition. The design of an effective action plan for implementing policy measures was equally important, as were dynamic and committed leadership, local political support, interested private organizations and institutions, emphasis on service quality, a receptive audience and availability of resources. However, evidence from 25 years of experience in organized family planning programmes showed that high-quality services, backed by consistent political and administrative support and innovative public education efforts, could produce rapid changes in reproductive behaviour in a wide variety of economic, political, social, cultural and religious settings.

14. The Meeting found ample evidence that the implementation of population programmes could be impaired by over-reliance on the governmental sector and that bottlenecks were likely to occur without the support of community organizations and other grass-roots, non-governmental institutions. The Meeting therefore recommended that Governments and international organizations should evolve a close partnership with the non-governmental sector; in particular, Governments should facilitate assistance to local non-governmental organizations on the part of international organizations and community participation should be actively encouraged and supported at every stage of the formulation, implementation and evaluation of population policies and programmes.

15. The Meeting was informed that the population field faced a major challenge in the last decade of the twentieth century: the success of population programmes had itself engendered a growing scarcity of resources, as the demands for population assistance had begun to outstrip the supply of population assistance funds, which threatened to place a severe damper on the momentum of population programmes just as they were reaching maximum effectiveness. While donors were called upon to strive to double their 1990 contributions to population programmes by the year 2000, developing countries were also urged to make all possible efforts to generate domestic resources through selective use of user fees and other forms of cost recovery and mobilization of local resources (without however forsaking the needs of those least able to pay or lowering the quality of services). The Meeting also noted the fundamental importance of research for policy and programme formulation and emphasized that the mobilization of resources for research in population should be considered an integral part of strategies for coping with population problems.

16. In the context of increasing resource scarcity in relation to needs, donors were asked to strengthen their capacity to respond more effectively to requests for assistance through, inter alia, increased coordination and

increased attention to the issue of cost effectiveness, in order to ensure that funds were used to maximum advantage. Nevertheless, it was recognized that the primary responsibility for donor coordination rested with the recipient countries themselves.

C. Population and women

17. The objective of the Expert Group Meeting was to identify practical steps that Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, donors and the private sector could take that would help empower women, have desirable effects on health, the process of family formation and other population trends, and also promote development. The Meeting agreed that sensitization to gender issues should be a priority, that gender-based analysis should become an essential instrument in the design and implementation of all development activities and that development policies and strategies should be assessed from the perspective of their impact on women's social, economic and health status.

18. A major theme of the Meeting was the need for women to be represented in much greater numbers in the policy-making arena and at all levels of planning, managing and executing population and development and environmental programmes, both for reasons of equity and to ensure the success of policies. Donors, Governments and non-governmental organizations were urged to seek culturally appropriate modalities for both the delivery of services and the integration of women in population and development initiatives. The participants also emphasized that any development, population and health programmes that solicited the involvement of or attempted to deliver benefits to communities should be based on the direct participation of women. In particular, they should not assume that information exchanged with or resources delivered to men would necessarily reach women.

19. Given the important and far-reaching implications of women's education for their status, their fertility and the chances of survival of their children, the Meeting urged Governments and non-governmental organizations to make special efforts to promote the access of women and girls to both formal and non-formal education and to devise innovative strategies to surmount the socio-economic and familial constraints responsible for gender inequalities in school enrolment.

20. The Meeting also discussed women's economic activity and its relationship to fertility and child health and welfare. In view of the interaction between extreme poverty and demographic trends, and recognizing that increased economic productivity of women was vital both for their own interests and for national development, the Meeting urged Governments to strengthen women's access to productive employment, to protect women from economic discrimination and to remove all remaining legal and social barriers to their economic independence, including discrimination that restricts women's access to the benefits of social security and health-care systems on the basis of marital status.

21. The Meeting paid considerable attention to the roles of men, recommending that Governments should strengthen efforts to promote and encourage the active involvement of men in all areas of family responsibility, including family planning, child-rearing and housework. The Meeting pointed out that children were entitled to the material and emotional support of both fathers and mothers,

who should provide for all their children of both sexes on an equitable basis. Governments and private-sector employers were urged to take steps to enable parents to harmonize their economic and parental responsibilities and to ensure that both women and men should be able to exercise their rights to employment without being the subject of discrimination because of family responsibilities.

22. The Meeting endorsed reproductive choice as a basic right, whose realization could open up a range of other choices for women, and it urged that women and men as individuals should be assured confidential access to safe methods of fertility regulation within the framework of an adequate health system. The Meeting adopted various recommendations on measures to promote the health of women and girls, with a major focus on the various aspects of reproductive health, which encompassed not only safe childbirth and infant health but also the ability to bear children that were wanted, to regulate fertility without risks to one's health and to protect oneself from sexually transmitted diseases, including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). In this respect, the Meeting agreed that Governments and non-governmental organizations must promote safer sex, including the use of condoms, and must provide adequate medical services for sexually transmitted diseases. Having identified unsafe abortion as a major cause of maternal mortality, the Meeting recommended that a woman wishing to terminate her pregnancy should have ready access to reliable information, sympathetic counselling and safe abortion services. The Meeting also urged Governments to act vigorously to stop the practice of genital mutilation and to protect the right of women and girls to be free from such unnecessary and dangerous procedures.

23. The Meeting paid particular attention to the needs of adolescents. Governments were urged to enforce laws pertaining to minimum age at marriage so as to ensure young women's right to health and the rights of young people of both sexes to education and employment. In addition with a view to promoting and protecting adolescent reproductive health, Governments were asked to adopt such measures as the teaching of family life education with a realistic sex education component and the provision of appropriate counselling and services to girls and boys, drawing on the experience of non-governmental organizations in that area.

24. The Meeting agreed on a research and data-collection agenda, containing various critical areas relevant to gender analysis in which information was considered to be seriously deficient, such as, inter alia, structure and dynamics of the family; roles and use of time of women, men and children; men's attitude and behaviour regarding reproduction; child-care arrangements; unplanned pregnancy and abortion; and sexual abuse and domestic violence.

D. Family planning, health and family well-being

25. The Expert Group Meeting reviewed a large number of policy-oriented issues emerging from the extensive experience of family planning programmes throughout the world, particularly the role of those programmes in socio-economic development and ways to make them more effective and efficient while contributing to the improvement of the status of women and the promotion of the health and well-being of families. The Meeting observed that family planning

programmes could have an independent effect on fertility and that their effectiveness was greatly enhanced when socio-economic development occurred simultaneously. Among the programme characteristics identified as crucial for the success of family planning programmes, the Meeting considered political commitment fundamental and called upon political leaders to play a strong, sustained and highly visible role in promoting and legitimizing the voluntary adoption of family planning.

26. The Meeting agreed that family planning programmes should be regarded as a cost-effective component of a broader development strategy and pointed out that demographic goals were legitimately the subject of government policies and programmes to achieve sustainable development. Nevertheless, the Meeting emphasized that family planning services should be framed in the context of the needs of individuals, especially women, with respect for the privacy and the dignity of clients and with the aim of helping them achieve their reproductive goals based on voluntary, free and informed choice. The Meeting urged governmental and non-governmental organizations to improve the quality of family planning services by incorporating the users' perspective and ensuring that clients were given the widest possible choice of contraceptive methods, thorough and accurate information, systematic follow-up and counselling, technically competent service providers and readily available and accessible services.

27. The Meeting urged Governments to support the family through public policies and programmes, taking into consideration changes in family forms, size and structure, as well as the need to provide women with opportunities for personal development and greater autonomy within both the family and society at large. The Meeting also saw the need for Governments, donors and non-governmental organizations to encourage greater involvement in and responsibility for family planning on the part of men through, inter alia, strategies to encourage responsible fatherhood.

28. The Meeting identified abortion as a major public health concern as well as one of the most neglected problems affecting women's lives and recommended that women everywhere should have access to sensitive counselling and safe abortion services. In view of the high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases, including the AIDS pandemic, the Meeting emphasized the need for family planning programmes to include sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS education and prevention within the scope of their reproductive health-care activities. The Meeting was of the opinion that reproductive health care should be provided as an integrated package of services that were mutually strengthening, cost-effective and convenient for users.

29. The Meeting also urged Governments to recognize the special needs of adolescents, calling for special efforts to be made to reach young people with information and education and to provide adolescent men and women with confidential services without regard to marital status or age. Population and family life education programmes, designed to help children and young adults make informed decisions regarding their sexual behaviour, responsible parenthood and family planning, should be strengthened at all levels of formal education and literacy programmes.

30. The Meeting devoted considerable attention to the role of non-governmental organizations in family planning, recognizing their comparative advantage in

public advocacy and in dealing innovatively with such issues as the reproductive health of adolescents, women's empowerment, community participation, broader reproductive health services, quality of care and outreach to marginalized groups. It was therefore recommended that partnerships between the public sector and non-governmental organizations be developed to test the effectiveness and acceptability of new approaches and to expand access to family planning services.

31. The Meeting considered with concern the increasing magnitude of contraceptive requirements and logistic management needs of family planning programmes, noting that with a view to reaching the medium-variant projections of the United Nations, the cost of contraceptive commodities alone had been estimated at US$ 627 million in the year 2000 and the associated logistics, management and service-delivery costs were likely to increase this figure tenfold. While urging all Governments and other donors to increase significantly their levels of development assistance for family planning to face growing resource requirements, the Meeting also emphasized the need to pay more attention to issues of cost effectiveness, efficiency, cost recovery, community resource mobilization and local production of contraceptives, where appropriate, in order to ensure the optimum use of available resources.

E. Population growth and demographic structure

32. The Expert Group Meeting reviewed past trends and future prospects of population growth and age structure and their consequences for long-term sustainability at the global level. A major concern was the inevitability of persistent growth well into the twenty-first century due to the momentum built into the age structure of most developing countries. Population projections showed that the world population was expected to reach between 7.6 and 9.4 billion in 2025, a crucial determinant of the actual figure being the rapidity of the decline in fertility in developing countries in the coming years. In view of those trends and their consequences for long-term sustainability at the global and national levels, the Meeting stressed the urgency of increasing political commitment to human resource development and population programmes that had impacts on population trends and characteristics.

33. The Meeting singled out widespread poverty as a critical factor exacerbating the consequences of rapid population growth and a major obstacle to fertility and mortality decline. Consequently, besides advising that Governments adopt comprehensive, consistent economic and social strategies to alleviate poverty and reduce social inequality, the Meeting urged the international community to increase assistance to development and population programmes in the least developed countries.

34. The Meeting considered educational levels to be a major factor in reducing mortality and fertility and in increasing individual earnings, especially in the light of the importance of a skilled labour force in an increasingly competitive world. Noting the continuing increase in school-age population in most developing countries, it urged Governments to give high-policy priority to educational programmes benefiting all children, irrespective of gender.

35. The role and status of women was seen as critical in effecting the demographic transition. Improvements in the health and education of women had proved to be strongly instrumental in leading to declines in fertility and household mortality. In addition, participation of women in the formal labour force and the adoption of measures to ensure women's economic independence were important not only from a demographic standpoint but also for achieving sustainable development in general. The Meeting therefore recommended that high priority be given to investments and expenditures that would increase women's access to education, training, credit and opportunities to participate in the formal labour force.

36. The Meeting stressed that the provision of social and health services, particularly comprehensive reproductive health-care programmes, in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility, was an essential component of efforts to improve health, reduce mortality and lower fertility. Such services were often unevenly distributed, calling for greater spatial, social, age and gender equity in the allocation of resources. Furthermore, since morbidity profiles were changing as a result of rapid demographic and epidemiological transition, health-sector priorities should be reassessed to adapt to those new situations and ensure the selection of the most cost-effective and efficient means of providing health care for all.

37. The Meeting also examined the AIDS pandemic and its demographic and socio-economic consequences, which were found to be potentially devastating. The Meeting therefore recommended that Governments should give high priority to devising appropriate responses to the crisis, including increased public awareness, preventive efforts and ways to mitigate the socio-economic problems that were likely to arise. International and national health-care strategies should be developed for preventing and curing sexually transmitted diseases with a view to minimizing HIV infection.

38. The Meeting devoted considerable attention to population ageing and emphasized that the elderly, a heterogeneous and active group, were first and foremost an important human resource for development. Nevertheless, in the face of the very rapid process of population ageing occurring in many areas, the Meeting recommended that research efforts and policy analysis should be undertaken on the most equitable and appropriate modalities of allocating public, private and family resources to accommodate the growing number of elderly persons. In those countries where pension and social security programmes for the elderly were inadequate, the Meeting recommended that high priority should be given to establishing a safety net for the elderly. The Meeting also pointed out that in many societies, the very old were the fastest growing segment of the population, while changes in family structure were likely to result in an increased proportion of the elderly living alone. Special efforts should be made to enable the very old to remain in their own homes and community by ensuring that adequate support was available.

39. The Meeting emphasized the importance of long-term planning to anticipate the changing needs over time of the young, elderly and working-age populations, in order to ensure that adequate resources were available when and where they were needed, keeping in mind the changing role and status of the family in the process of development. The Meeting identified several areas of population structure in need of increased research and data-collection efforts, with

particular reference to policy-relevant, social, cultural, age-specific, and ethnic- and gender-specific subnational data.

F. Population distribution and migration

40. The Expert Group Meeting appraised current trends in population distribution and migration and their interrelations with development. It concluded that migration was a rational response by individuals and families to spatial differences in opportunities. It recognized that population mobility was an option to improve the life chances of a wide section of the world population and that improvements in transportation and communications, growing mobility of capital and expanding social networks were all contributing to an increase in permanent and temporary migration.

41. Urbanization was viewed as an intrinsic part of development, thus necessitating the integration of population distribution policies into national development strategies. The Meeting noted that, at the same time, it was important to keep in mind that rural and urban development were two sides of the same coin and that strategies that emphasized one at the expense of the other were doomed to failure. Since in many developing countries the rural population was expected to keep on growing, the Meeting agreed that it was urgent to improve rural economic opportunities and productivity while ensuring sustainability. Strengthening economic interactions between urban and rural areas, and improving rural infrastructure were recommended. The establishment of credit and production cooperatives in rural areas to enhance local control over resources was also endorsed. Governments were urged to recognize and safeguard the traditional rights of rural communities over common lands and water resources. It was judged that a key task of Governments was to address the social and economic needs of their populations and alleviate poverty in both rural and urban areas.

42. The Meeting observed that the continued growth of urban populations posed major challenges for development but also opened new opportunities. In particular, the emergence of complex urban agglomerations, in which several cities interacted as nodes of a system linked to the world economy by the exchange of goods, information, financial flows and people, had provided an impetus for development. The management of urban centres in developing countries could be improved by strengthening the capacity, competence and accountability of city and municipal authorities, by decentralizing expenditure responsibility and the right to raise revenues and by adopting equitable cost-recovery schemes to allow make the expansion of infrastructure and services. It was recognized that to gain control of urban growth, particularly in countries where general population growth was high, policies aimed at reducing natural increase would have to be considered.

43. With regard to international migration, the processes leading to increasing migration pressures were reviewed and it was recommended that trade barriers be reduced and investment in countries of origin be increased to reduce those pressures. In formulating general economic, trade and development cooperation policies, Governments were urged to consider how those policies affected migration. In addition, Governments were called upon to protect the rights of migrants and to ensure that national legislation and regulations did not

discriminate against female migrants. It was recommended that Governments of receiving countries permit family reunification, facilitate the naturalization of long-term foreign residents and second-generation migrants, take measures to combat xenophobia and racism and adopt effective sanctions against those who organized illegal migration and those who knowingly employed undocumented migrants. Governments of countries of origin were urged to cooperate in protecting their migrant workers abroad and in facilitating the transfer and use of remittances by providing banking facilities and adopting sound exchange-rate and monetary policies. Governments of both countries of origin and destination were called upon to promote and support migrant associations, particularly those that assisted migrants in vulnerable situations.

44. Special attention was given to the challenges posed by the growing number of refugees and asylum-seekers. Governments, the international community and non-governmental organizations were urged to address the underlying causes of refugee movements and to take appropriate measures regarding conflict resolution, the promotion of peace, the respect of human rights, poverty alleviation, democratization, good governance and the prevention of environmental degradation. Governments were called upon to support the international protection and assistance of refugees, to promote the search for durable solutions to their plight, to strengthen regional and international mechanisms that would enhance their capacity to share equitably those protection and assistance needs, and to protect the right of asylum by respecting the principle of "non-refoulement". Recognizing that, to be successful, repatriation programmes had to be linked to long-term reconstruction and development plans, the Meeting urged the international community to facilitate those linkages. It further called on the international community to address the specific needs of female refugees and to assist long-standing refugee populations in achieving self-sufficiency. Governments of countries of asylum were asked to consider facilitating the naturalization of long-term refugees.

45. The Meeting recognized that policy formulation regarding population distribution and migration was being hampered by the lack of adequate data on migration and urbanization and the paucity of research on those topics. To combat those deficiencies, it was recommended that national statistical offices should collect, tabulate, publish and disseminate demographic data for small geographical areas; migration surveys should be carried out in countries hosting large numbers of international migrants; data on international migration by selected demographic characteristics should be published and disseminated; methods should be developed to register and monitor refugee populations; and a systematic effort should be made to gather data on internally displaced persons. In addition, the Meeting felt that there was a need to review existing standard definitions and classifications of urban and rural populations and international migrants.

III. COMMON ISSUES

46. As section II above suggests, certain themes and issues were common to all or nearly all of the Expert Group Meetings and were thus discussed from widely different perspectives. In this section an attempt has been made to summarize the common themes which emerge when the recommendations are viewed collectively.

A. Sustainable development and sustained economic growth

47. The Expert Group Meetings took the perspective of integrating population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development. At the same time, the participants realized that adopting concrete population policy measures in order to ensure sustainable development was difficult because such measures were often situation-specific. Moreover, they appeared to be a matter of political appreciation and decision, which could only emerge from the context of national policy-making processes. It was also recognized that those issues might involve conflicting goals between nations, regions and groups. Therefore, the approach followed by the Expert Group Meetings was to recognize certain general principles, such as the importance of linkages between population, development and environment, and to recommend indirect courses of action, such as research, education, awareness raising, training and institutional arrangements for the integration of population and development planning, which would in turn assist the policy-making process. As was suggested at one of the Meetings, those efforts should include the identification and open analysis of the conflicting goals mentioned above, in order to make fruitful negotiation possible.

48. Poverty was recognized as being closely related to both undesirable demographic trends and environmental degradation; together with social inequality it was seen as exacerbating the consequences of rapid population growth. Governments were therefore urged to alleviate poverty and reduce social inequality. The Meetings viewed sustained economic growth pragmatically, suggesting that it was reconcilable with sustainable development, provided that appropriate technologies were developed, promoted and made accessible to those who needed them most and also that appropriate policies and planning approaches were followed to stimulate conservation and avoid environmental deterioration. That pragmatism was also apparent with respect to urbanization and migration, which were seen as part and parcel of the development process.

49. Considerable emphasis was placed on the fundamental role of health and education in the development process. The Meetings approached that question not only from a macro-social perspective (for instance, reaffirming the need to safeguard the priority of health and education in the allocation of development resources) but also from a practical, micro-social point of view (calling, for example, for the promotion of service outreach and for steps to identify and overcome the socio-economic and familial constraints behind high drop-out rates and inequalities in school enrolment).

B. Relevance of past experience

50. The work of the Expert Group Meetings had been greatly facilitated by and made ample reference to the international experience accumulated in the field of population during the past two decades, both through the process of intergovernmental negotiations and through the process of formulation, implementation and evaluation of population policies and programmes. The previous intergovernmental conferences on population in Bucharest (1974) and Mexico City (1984) had emphasized the need to consider population issues in the context of development and had established a methodology, a scientific basis and a tradition for doing so in the framework of intergovernmental negotiations. More recently, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had

brought to the fore of the political agenda the concept of sustainable development, defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". 3/ That concept, because of its inherent inter-generational perspective, had provided a useful focus for discussions on population and development issues. The Meetings also drew extensively on the large body of experience currently available from around the world in all aspects of population programme implementation but particularly with respect to reproductive health programmes, including family planning.

C. Human rights

51. The Expert Group Meetings were mindful of the human rights dimension of population programmes, emphasizing not only the necessity for such programmes to respect human rights but also the positive contribution that population programmes could make towards facilitating the realization of those rights. Moreover, the Meetings noted that the human rights dimension was relevant to the entire range of population phenomena, including migration, ageing and family formation.

D. Status of women

52. The Meetings reiterated the central role that women play in development and recognized that development efforts would be accelerated with the active involvement and full participation of women. Moreover, the whole body of recommendations showed that gender issues permeated the deliberations of all the Meetings. Three complementary perspectives were used: improvement of the situation of women, re-evaluation of their traditional roles and creation of new roles for them and their male partners. The emergence of new roles for women was seen as being, to a large extent, predicated on women's economic independence and freedom from discrimination in access to resources.

53. It was also suggested that the re-evaluation of the roles of women might necessitate a redistribution of the social roles and responsibilities of women and men. For instance, men were called upon to share responsibilities most commonly assumed by women, in such areas as contraception and family responsibilities. Governments were urged to encourage this process through appropriate legislative, educational and motivational measures, including programmes to promote acceptance among men and women of equal rights in sexual relationships.

E. The family

54. The Expert Group Meetings recognized the vital importance of the family, in its various forms, as a cornerstone of society. In the process of development and demographic transition the family was seen as an important institution to ensure nurturing, support, stability and socialization. The Meetings recognized that the family remained an essential institution in all societies. The Meetings urged Governments to support the family, in particular by providing

public policies and programmes, bearing in mind changing family forms, size and structure.

F. Accessibility and quality of services

55. The Meetings recognized the critical importance of the accessibility of services, particularly in the area of reproductive health, for promoting social equality and accelerating development efforts.

56. The issue of quality of services delivered by population programmes emerged in various contexts in all the Expert Group Meetings, essentially from two different perspectives. One was that service quality was an important parameter for programme success and should, therefore, be a paramount managerial concern. In that context, policy makers were warned that excessive emphasis on quotas and other quantitative goals, to the extent that it detracted from service quality, could well be a self-defeating management tool. The other perspective was that people in general, but particularly the less empowered groups in society, had a basic right to health and family planning services of the highest possible quality, both humane and respectful of their clients' dignity and privacy.

G. Special needs of subpopulations

57. The Meetings generally paid considerable attention to the rights and special needs of subpopulations, such as children, adolescents, the elderly and the very old, women and migrants, depending on the theme of each Meeting. Regarding adolescents and young people, particular emphasis was given to meeting their reproductive health needs in the context of population programmes, including family life education, counselling and contraceptive services.

H. Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

58. Several of the Meetings addressed issues raised by the AIDS pandemic. Family planning programmes were viewed as being able to play an important role in the prevention of HIV infection through, inter alia, information activities; promotion of safer sex, including the use of condoms; and services for prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases.

I. The role of Governments, non-governmental organizations and community participation

59. Most recommendations were addressed to Governments, as the Meetings took place in the context of the preparations for an intergovernmental conference. However, many of the recommendations were co-addressed to non-governmental organizations and the private sector or emphasized the need for community participation. The basic thrust of the recommendations was that a partnership of Government and private-sector agencies in the area of population was both desirable and critical, given the need to increase the cost effectiveness of programmes through improved outreach, enhanced quality of service delivery, innovative strategies and popular participation.

60. The activities of non-governmental organizations were seen as supportive and complementary to governmental activities. The comparative advantages of the non-governmental organizations in certain areas, such as advocacy on behalf of the poor and other underserved and marginalized groups, were clearly recognized. It was recommended that donor resources should be made available to national non-governmental organizations for their population activities.

61. Repeated reference was made to the importance of community participation and many specific areas were identified in which such participation was considered desirable or even crucial to the success of actions being recommended. Within the public sector, decentralization and delegation of power and responsibilities to local authorities was advocated as consistent with a more open and responsive style of governance.

J. Research and data collection

62. The Meetings emphasized the fundamental importance of research for policy and programme formulation and all of them identified themes in their respective subject areas which appeared to require more research and data-collection efforts. The Meetings also emphasized that there should be an explicit orientation of research towards meeting the needs of policy-making and programme implementation. Some of the research and data-collection needs resulted from the emergence of relatively recent political agendas, such as the issue of sustainable development, good governance or gender equality in the domestic sphere. In other cases, the need for research emerged from the continued lack of data on topics traditionally avoided because of their sensitivity, such as the determinants and consequences of induced abortion, or sexual abuse and domestic violence.

K. International cooperation

63. All of the Meetings adopted numerous recommendations involving the international donor community in partnership with Governments and non-governmental organizations of recipient countries. Noting the growing need for resources for population activities, the Meetings recognized the need to increase the mobilization of domestic resources and specific approaches to that end were discussed at the Meetings. The Meetings also considered international cooperation in various forms, including technical assistance, to be essential for progress in the area of population. Indeed, to meet the growing needs of international cooperation it was indicated that current resource flows would need to be approximately doubled in the course of the current decade.

Notes

1/ See E/CONF.84/PC/4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

2/ See Report of the United Nations World Population Conference, Bucharest, 19-30 August 1974 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.75.XIII.3), chap. I, and Report of the International Conference on Population, Mexico City, 6-14 August 1984 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.84.XIII.8), chap. I, sect. B.

3/ Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (A/42/427) p. 54.